

Government to further enhance compulsory testing in four specified areas

The Government will exercise the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and publish in the Gazette compulsory testing notices, which require any person who had been present at 40 specified premises during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

Currently in all districts in Hong Kong (except following specified areas and restricted areas), if confirmed cases not epidemiologically linked to each other are found in two or more units in the same building in the past 14 days, the building will be included in the compulsory testing notice. Furthermore, the Government delineates specified areas or restricted areas in accordance with risk assessments, in order to strengthen compulsory testing in a targeted manner. Details are as below:

1. Specified areas: If there is one or more new confirmed cases found in the residential buildings (including buildings for both commercial and residential uses), or there are sewage samples tested positive which implied possible infection risks, the buildings will be included in the compulsory testing notice. The Government has delineated earlier two specified areas, namely the "Jordan specified area" bounded by Nathan Road to its east, Jordan Road to its south, Ferry Street to its west and Kansu Street to its north and the "Sham Shui Po specified area" bounded by Yen Chow Street to its northwest, Tai Po Road to its northeast, Maple Street to its southeast and Lai Chi Kok Road to its southwest.
2. Restricted areas: Subject to the epidemic development and the need for infection control, the Government will delineate restricted areas and make a "restriction-testing declaration". Persons within the areas are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the arrangement by the Government, and can only leave after the relevant test results are mostly ascertained. All premises within the restricted areas, whether or not confirmed cases were found therein, would be included in the compulsory testing notice. Any person who had been present in the restricted area for more than two hours in the past 14 days (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers) have to also undergo compulsory testing.

Delineating different areas according to the above mechanism can effectively take forward compulsory testing based on the epidemic and the risk level, and identify on a "compulsory testing on mandatory basis" silent transmitters which cannot be easily located in the community otherwise.

Upon risk assessment, the Government has decided to expand the scope of compulsory testing for "specified areas" starting from January 26, including keeping one specified area, expanding one specified area and delineating two new specified areas, in order to further cut the transmission chain in the community. Details are as below:

1. Expand the original "Jordan specified area" to an area bounded by Nathan Road to its east, Austin Road to its south, Ferry Street, Man Cheong Street, Man Wui Street and Canton Road to its west, and Kansu Street to its north (see Annex 1);
2. Delineate the "Yau Ma Tei/Mong Kok specified area" bounded by Nathan Road to its east, Public Square Street to its south, Ferry Street to its west and Dundas Street to its north (see Annex 2);
3. Delineate the "Hung Hom specified area" bounded by Station Lane to its northeast, Dock Street and Po Loi Street to its southeast, Winslow Street and Hung Hom South Road to its southwest, and Chatham Road North to its northwest (see Annex 3); and
4. Continue to keep the "Sham Shui Po specified area" (see Annex 4).

Starting from January 26, for buildings within the above four "specified areas", if there is one or more new confirmed cases found, or there are sewage samples tested positive which implied possible infection risks, the buildings will be included in the compulsory testing notice. The Government will accord priority to the sewage testing of buildings in the areas with confirmed cases in the past 14 days. The buildings will be included in the compulsory testing notice if it is confirmed that the risks remain.

A spokesman for the Food and Health bureau (FHB) said, "The Government will seriously follow up on the compliance of compulsory testing notices by persons subject to compulsory testing, and continually review the compulsory testing arrangement of the above specified areas taking into account the epidemic development, including whether new 'specified areas' or 'restricted areas' will be delineated."

"Since the infection risk in the community of the specified areas might be higher, the Government encourages residents in the areas to undergo testing proactively and promptly, even if they are not subject to compulsory testing. The mobile specimen collection stations will provide free testing services for all residents in the areas regardless of whether they are subject to compulsory testing or not."

Thirty-one buildings fulfilling the above criteria were included in the compulsory testing notice on January 26. Furthermore, eight buildings with sewage samples tested positive and located outside the specified areas were included in the compulsory testing notice. Details are as follows:

Any person who had been present at any specified premises listed in Annex 5 for more than two hours at any time during the period from January 13 to January 26, 2021 (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers), have to undergo testing by January 29, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between January 24 and January 26, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.

In addition, the Government has made a "restriction-testing declaration" (the declaration), effective from 7pm on January 26, by which people within the specified "restricted area" in Yau Ma Tei (i.e. 9-27 Pitt Street and 3 Tung On Street. See Annex 6.) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the arrangement by the Government. The Government has also published a compulsory testing notice to all premises within the "restricted area", which requires persons who had been present in the "restricted area" for more than two hours in the past 14 days, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, to undergo compulsory testing by January 28, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between January 24 and January 26, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.

To facilitate members of the public to comply with the compulsory testing notices published earlier which are still in effect, the Government will set up mobile specimen collection stations at Wuhu Street Temporary Playground in Hung Hom, Hung Hom Municipal Services Building Sports Centre, and Yan Fu House of Tin Fu Court in Tin Shui Wai today (January 27). The service period of the mobile specimen collection station at Maple Street Playground will be extended to January 30, 2021 (Saturday), and the service period of the mobile specimen collection station at Kwun Chung Sports Centre and the mobile specimen collection vehicles at the section of Canton Road between Jordan Road and Saigon Street (also called Jade Street) will also be extended to February 1, 2021 (Monday). The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations in various districts providing free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing services for the general public are stated in Annex 7. Apart from mobile specimen collection stations, persons subject to compulsory testing can also choose to attend any of the community testing centres in all districts to receive testing free of charge.

Persons subject to compulsory testing may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

1. To visit any of the mobile specimen collection stations (see the list and target groups (if applicable) at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html) for testing;
2. To attend any of the community testing centres (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/);
3. To obtain a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack from any of the 121 post offices, vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations or 47 designated general outpatient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority and return the

specimen to one of the designated specimen collection points (see the distribution points and times, and the specimen collection points and times, at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html);

4. To undergo testing at any of the GOPCs of the Hospital Authority as instructed by a medical professional of the Hospital Authority;
5. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the Department of Health (DH) and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories_RTPCR.pdf); or
6. To use a specimen bottle distributed to the relevant specified premises by the Centre for Health Protection (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the sample collected as per relevant guidelines.

The spokesman cautioned that testing received at accident and emergency departments of the Hospital Authority or during hospital stays, or testing provided by private laboratories which cannot issue SMS notifications in respect of test results, does not comply with the requirements of the aforementioned compulsory testing notices.

"If persons subject to compulsory testing have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately and undergo testing as instructed by a medical professional. They should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the community testing centres."

Persons subject to compulsory testing must keep the SMS notification containing result of the test for checking by a law enforcement officer when the officer requires the persons to provide information about their undergoing the specified test.

Furthermore, persons subject to testing under the compulsory testing notices should, as far as reasonably practicable, take appropriate personal disease prevention measures including wearing a mask and maintaining hand hygiene, and, unless for the purpose of undergoing the specified test, stay at their place of residence and avoid going out until the test result is ascertained as far as possible.

Any enquiries on compulsory testing arrangements may be addressed to the hotline at 6275 6901, which operates daily from 9am to 6pm. If persons subject to compulsory testing plan to conduct testing at any of the community testing centres, they can check the centre's appointment status in advance. The hotlines of the community testing centres are available at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/info/.

The Government will continue to trace possibly infected persons who had been to the relevant premises, and seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notices. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person would also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

Relevant officers of different government departments are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals to provide information and assistance when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). Collection and use of any personal data for conducting COVID-19 tests must meet the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). Government departments or testing service providers which handle the relevant information may provide the data to DH or other relevant departments for anti-epidemic purpose as necessary. The workflow does not involve the provision of any personal data to organisations or persons outside Hong Kong.

The spokesman said, "The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health conditions, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or contacted confirmed cases), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons. The FHB will publish compulsory testing notices regarding particular groups when necessary taking into account the epidemic developments and the testing participation rate."